

## **John Witherspoon**

The revolutionary period of American history is likely the largest-looming historical period in the general public's mind. Rightfully so, as this was the transformative period that turned the general public into the American general public; it made us who we are. Now, centuries later, we celebrate the 4th of July and sing The Star-Spangled Banner in patriotic remembrance of how we acquired and have kept this republican project. This said, I worry that over the past 160 years since we've had war on our soil and the nearly 250 years since this soil actually became ours that people might be taking this monumental gift that is our liberty for granted. Most Americans today are fortunate enough to live and have lived in a time of relative peace in this country. This is assuredly only a good thing, however it may leave some of us without any contrasting idea to our hard-delivered freedom.

I am a young man who has fortunately only known peacetime and the enjoyment of the rights afforded to me by our Constitution. I am certainly no exception to this lack of personal knowledge of a life outside of freedom, and for this I am eternally grateful. This is exactly what our forefathers would have wanted from their deeds, but we cannot forget what was given for these gifts. I believe it is important to think on the state of the world our ancestors lived in and the sacrifices they made for the country they brought about. They did not spill their blood, nor the blood of their sons, cheaply; they fought to extricate themselves and us from malicious governance so that we may pursue a life of happiness.

For this reason it is of capital importance to honor and remember our forefathers' actions. We must also remind those who may have forgotten the gravity of their deeds that our ancestors were clutching after something unheard of, now the cornerstone of our society. Without these deeds, we and our predecessors could not have enjoyed equal station to other men and the right of involvement in the own governance of our daily lives. No democracy such as the one they carved out of a world of monarchy had existed in such a way for over 1800 years. It is frankly an amazing feat to have striven for and accomplished at the highest personal cost. This is the message that I stress to myself and to my fellow citizens: the fortune we have acquired from those we're indebted to must be understood, honored, and savored. Keeping history on our tongues and in our minds is paramount, and it is my duty as a descendant of a Signer to ensure this is and remains the case.

I strive to empower my fellow citizens through my awareness of our history and my voice in discussions of our country. We are free at great cost, and to return ourselves to bondage would be a disservice to our forefathers who fought so hard to deliver us from it. As members and living pieces of this republic, this public thing, we must recall why we live in a democracy and why it is our duty to protect it. To disregard this task and to be caught unawares would be catastrophic. Being unable to keep this republic would change the

entire landscape of this nation in ways I am unable and can't bear to envision; it simply wouldn't be our country anymore. The members of the Constitutional Convention handed us a robust system of governance resistant to overthrow via the separation of power, a hopefully unfailing system that must be backed up by the consent of the governed. I seek to remind all those who will listen of the duty we have to maintain it through careful attention, awareness, and action. We must work together to keep our republic, where all are heard and take part in its mechanisms and its bounties.